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## Background

- With an aging population, there is a growing demand for home support to enable older adults to live independently in their homes.
- Despite investment, there remains an acute labour shortage in this sector resulting in many older people not receiving the home help hours they have been allocated and others who may need home help not even being considered for hours particularly if they have mild cognitive difficulties without need for physical assistance.
- Here we report a profile of patients impacted by the consequences of disparity in allocated support and care hours fulfilled.

## Methods

- A retrospective analysis of 155 patients presenting to community based clinics over 2.5 years where data was available on home support hours was conducted and results compared to the previous year.
- Participants included were new patients referred for comprehensive geriatric assessment.

## Results

- 155 participants, mean age of 82 years (SD 7). 63% (n=97) participants were female.
- 23.9% (n=37) had a mismatch in home help hours filled compared to hours allocated and more likely to be female with a higher Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS)
- Patients with an informal caregiver were more likely to have a mismatch in hours (OR 5.97; 95% CI, 1.67-38.11).
- Carers burnout/strain was 3 times more likely where there was a mismatch in home help hours (OR 3.58 (95% CI, 1.68-7.85).
- Compared to 2022, those in 2023 had a higher proportion of mismatched hours (30% vs 23.9%) and more were living alone (55% vs 46%).
- Patients with a mismatch in home help hours in 2023 were significantly more likely to be living in rural areas (85% Vs 69%, 95% CI, 5.3-26)

### Patient Characteristics

Median Age (IQR)	83 (79-87)
Clinical Frailty Scale 4-6	75%(N =117)
Median MOCA (IQR)	18 (15-22)
Barthel Index	17 (14-19)
Instrumental ADLs ≤ 6 (%)	80 (123)
Living Alone (%)	46 (71)
Rural dwelling (%)	69 (107)
Informal Carers (%)	79 (123)
Reported Carer Strain(%)	36 (56)

## Conclusions

- We identified a sizeable mismatch in home support hours allocated and hours received which is adversely affecting informal care givers of older people. The trend year on year appears to be disproportionately affecting older people living alone in rural areas due to lack of home support carers in the area.
- Further dedicated research is required to explore potential barriers to successful home support provision particularly in rural areas in conjunction with older people and their carers and the people delivering home care services.
- Pay, education, career progression and work life balance for carers needs to be addressed as well as potential uses of technology as an adjunctive addition of a virtual check in visit to make up for unallocated hours where carers can't be provided.